State Machines

15-494 Cognitive Robotics
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Robot Control Architectures

• State machines are the simplest and most widely used robot control architecture.

• Easy to implement; easy to understand.

• Not very powerful:
  – Action sequences must be laid out in advance, as a series of state nodes.
  – No dynamic planning.
  – Failure handling must be programmed explicitly.

• But a good place to start.
Basic Idea

- Robot moves from state to state.
- Each state has an associated action: *speak*, *move*, etc.
- Transitions triggered by sensory events or timers.
Types of State Nodes

- State nodes encapsulate complex actions, such as creating and launching a motion command.

```
Types of State Nodes

- BehaviorBase
- StateNode
  - MCNode<T>
  - LedNode
  - HeadPointerNode
  - ArmNode
  - TailWagNode
  - PostureNode
  - WalkEngineNode
  - WalkToTargetNode
  - MotionSequenceNode
  - SoundNode
  - SpeechNode
  - LogNode
  - VisualRoutinesStateNode

All of these contain Motion Commands
```
Types of Transitions

- CompareTrans<T>
- CompletionTrans
- ConnectionMadeTrans
- EventTrans
- NullTrans
- TextMsgTrans
- TimeOutTrans
- VisualTargetCloseTrans
- VisualTargetTrans
- RandomTrans
- LostTargetTrans
- SmoothCompareTrans<T>
Both State Nodes and Transitions Are Behaviors

- StateNode and Transition are both subclasses of BehaviorBase.
- Tekkotsu behaviors can contain arbitrary C++ code and can generate and/or receive events.
- Transitions:
  - A transition's start() method is called whenever its source state node becomes active.
  - Transitions listen for sensor, timer, or other events, and when their conditions are met, they fire.
  - When a transition fires, it deactivates its source node(s) and then activates its target node(s).
Transition firing activates state node Look.
Look's start() calls StateNode::start().
Outgoing transitions become active and begin listening for events.
Random things happen....

Look

Reach

Event
Event
Event

Turn

Wait
And then, something we've been looking for...
Transition decides to fire.
Transition deactivates the source node, Look.

Event!
Transition activates the target node, Reach.
Transition deactivates.
Reach activates its outgoing transition, which starts listening for events as Reach performs whatever action it's supposed to.
State Machine Compiler

- Tekkotsu programmers don't normally write C++ code to build state machines one node or link at a time.
- Why not?
  - It's tedious.
  - It's error-prone.
- Instead they use a shorthand notation.
- The shorthand is turned into C++ by a state machine compiler.
Shorthand Notation

bark: SoundNode("barkmed.wav")
howl: SoundNode("howl.wav")
wait: StateNode

bark =T(5000)=> howl
bark =B(RobotInfo::PlayButOffset)[setSound("ping.wav")]=> wait
howl =C=> wait
wait =T(15000)=> bark
#include "Behaviors/StateMachine.h"

$nodeclass AnnoyingDog : StateNode {

$setupmachine{

  bark: SoundNode("barkmed.wav")
  howl: SoundNode("howl.wav")
  wait: StateNode

  bark =T(5000)=> howl
  bark =B(RobotInfo::PlayButOffset)[setSound("ping.wav")]=> wait

  howl =C=> wait

  wait =T(15000)=> bark

}

}

REGISTER_BEHAVIOR(AnnoyingDog);
Advanced Shorthand: Chaining

• “Kiddie code”:

say_hi: SpeechNode(“Hi”)
say_bye: SpeechNode(“Bye”)
say_why: SpeechNode(“Why”)

say_hi =T(3000)=> say_bye
say_bye =T(3000)=> say_why

• Chained code:

SpeechNode(“hi”) =T(3000)=>
SpeechNode(“bye”) =T(3000)=>
SpeechNode(“why”)
Good Coding Style

• If a node has multiple outgoing transitions, don't use chaining.
  - Define the node first, on a separate line, with a label.
  - Then write each of the transitions below it.

• It's good to chain if a node has only one transition.

• Example:

  look: LookForToys
  look  =S=>  SpeechNode("a toy!")  =C=>  trygrab
  look  =F=>  askforhelp
Extensions to the Basic Formalism

• Extension 1: multi-states (parallelism).
  – Several states can be active at once.
  – Provides for parallel processing (but coroutines, not threads).

• Extension 2: hierarchical structure.
  – State machines can nest inside other state machines.

• Extension 3: message passing.
  – When a state posts an event that triggers a transition, it can include a message that will be passed to the destination state.
  – This makes state transitions resemble procedure calls.
Multi-State Machines

Launch

NoBlink
background LedMC

Bark
play file "barkmed.wav"

Wait
Head button pressed:
play file "ping.wav"
15 second timer expires

Howl
play file "howl.wav"
5 second timer expires
howl completed

Blink
cycle() LedMC
Blink Using LedEngine::cycle()

• Blink uses a motion command called LedMC, which is a child of LedEngine.

• The LedEngine::cycle() method never completes.

• When the howl completes, we want to leave both the howl state and the blink state.

• We can do this by telling CompletionTrans that only one of its source nodes needs to signal a completion in order for the transition to fire.

• When it does fire, it will deactivate both source nodes.
```cpp
$setupmachine{
    // Annoying dog with blinking LEDs

    launch: StateNode =N=> {noblink, bark}

    noblink:

    bark: SoundNode("barkmed.wav")
bark =B(PlayButOffset)[setSound("ping.wav")]=> wait
bark =T(5000)=> {howl, blink}

    howl: SoundNode("howl.wav")

    blink: LedNode[getMC()->cycle(RobotInfo::AllLEDMask, 1500, 1.0)]
{howl, blink} =C(1)=> wait

    wait: StateNode =T(15000)=> bark
}
```

What if we instead wrote this?
{howl, blink} =C=> wait
NoBlink in the Background

• When the robot isn't howling, we want all its LEDs to stay dark.
• But we can terminate the Blink node at any time; the LedNode might leave the LEDs in a partially-on state.
• Solution: have a second LEDNode called NoBlink programmed to keep the LEDs dark, but assign it a low priority.
• The Blink node will override NoBlink when it's active.
• When Blink is not active, NoBlink will keep the LEDs dark.
$setupmachine{
    // Annoying dog with blinking LEDs

    launch: StateNode =N=> {noblink, bark}

    noblink: LedNode [setPriority(MotionManager::kBackgroundPriority);
        getMC()->set(RobotInfo::AllLEDMask, 0.0)]

    bark: SoundNode("barkmed.wav")
    bark =B(PlayButOffset)[setSound("ping.wav")]=> wait
    bark =T(5000)=> {howl, blink}

    howl: SoundNode("howl.wav")

    blink: LedNode[getMC()->cycle(RobotInfo::AllLEDMask, 1500, 1.0)]
    {howl, blink} =C(1)=> wait

    wait: StateNode =T(15000)=> bark
}

file: BarkHowlBlinkBehavior.cc.fsm
Summary of Shorthand Notation

- Instantiating a node:
  
  `label: NodeClass(constructor_args)[initializers]`

  Labels must begin with a lowercase letter. Class names must begin with an uppercase letter.

- Transition, short form examples:
  
  `source =C=> target`
  `source =T(n)=> target`
  `source =E(g,s,t)=> target`

- Transition, long form:
  
  `source >= transname:
  TransitionClass(constructor_args)[initializers] ==> targetnode`

- Multiple sources/targets:
  
  `{src1, src2, ...} =Transition=> {targ1, targ2, ...}`
Short and Long Forms

\[ \implies \text{NullTrans} \implies \] \quad =N=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{CompletionTrans} \implies \] \quad =C=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{CompletionTrans}(n) \implies \] \quad =C(n)=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{TimeoutTrans}(t) \implies \] \quad =T(t)=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{EventTrans}(g,s,t) \implies \] \quad =E(g,s,t)=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{EventTrans}(\text{EventBase::buttonEGID}, s) \implies \] \quad =B(s)=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{TextMsgTrans}(\text{str}) \implies \] \quad =TM(\text{str})=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{RandomTrans} \implies \] \quad =RND=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{SignalTrans}<T> \implies \] \quad =S<T>=\rightarrow

\[ \implies \text{SignalTrans}<T>(v) \implies \] \quad =S<T>(v)=\rightarrow

success or failure transitions \quad =S=\rightarrow \text{ or } =F=\rightarrow
Defining the Start Node

• If there is a node labeled startnode, it will be taken as the start node of the state machine.

• If there is no startnode, then the first node instance defined in the file is taken as the start node.

• Example:

  apple =C=> pear =C=> apple
  pear: SpeechNode(“pear”)
  apple: SpeechNode(“apple”)

  The start node will be pear, since it is the first node instance defined.
#include “Behaviors/StateMachine.h”

$nodeclass MyMachine : StateNode {

    $nodeclass Greet : StateNode : doStart {
        cout << “Hello there!” << endl;
    }

    $nodeclass Sendoff : StateNode : doStart {
        cout << “So long!” << endl;
    }

    $setupmachine{
        startnode: Greet =T(5000)=> Sendoff
    }

    }

REGISTER_BEHAVIOR(MyMachine);
Compiling Your FSM

- The Makefile looks for files with names of form *.fsm and automatically runs them through the state machine compiler, called “stateparser”.

- BarkHowlBlinkBehavior.cc.fsm generates a pure C++ file called BarkHowlBlinkBehavior-fsm.cc.

- The .cc file is stored in:
  ~/project/build/PLATFORM_LOCAL/TARGET_xxx/

- You can run the stateparser directly:

  stateparser  BarkHowlBlinkBehavior.cc.fsm  –
Storyboard Tool: State Machine Layout
Storyboard Tool: Storyboard Display
Storyboard Tool: Snapshots